

Free well water testing for Wharton County continues – November 28th collection date

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WHARTON — “Wharton County area residents who want to have their well water tested should pick up a free water sampling test kit from their local Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service office”, said Corrie Bowen , Ag Extension Agent of Wharton County.

Wharton County area residents have another opportunity to have their well water tested to see if it has been contaminated by flooding from Hurricane Harvey. “I still feel like the need for testing water wells for Total Coliform bacteria and E. Coli after Hurricane Harvey is still there. We’ve been testing an average of 38 well water samples each week for the past five weeks. To meet the needs of those people needing to retest or for those who just got their wells repaired and running, we are making the test available again on November 28th,” Bowen reported.

Private water well owners whose wells flooded from Hurricane Harvey should assume their well water is contaminated until tested, according to Dr. Diane Boellstorff, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Water Resource Specialist, College Station. “You should not use water from a flooded well for drinking, cooking, making ice, brushing your teeth or even bathing until you are satisfied it is not contaminated,” Boellstorff said.

Boellstorff, who is in Texas A&M University’s soil and crop sciences department, said floodwater may contain substances from upstream, such as manure, sewage from flooded septic systems or wastewater treatment plants or other contaminants. A septic system near a well also can cause contamination when the soil is flooded.

AgriLife Extension’s Texas Well Owner Network is collaborating with Rebuild Texas, Virginia Tech and others to provide free water testing for total coliform and E. Coli in private water wells affected by flooding from Hurricane Harvey

Wharton County area residents can pick up a free water sampling test kit starting November 14th at the AgriLife Extension office at 315 E. Milam St., Suite 112, in Wharton. Instructions will be included with the kits. One important thing to make note of is that well owners must take the water sample on the morning on November 28th just prior to dropping the water sample off at the Wharton County Extension Office. Well owners will need to run their well pump for ten minutes, fill the sample bottle to the neck of the bottle, keep the sample cool and out of the sunlight, and deliver the water sample the Extension Office on November 28th from 8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Any homeowner with a private water well in the flood-affected area is eligible. Samples will be processed at Texas A&M University in College Station. We have enough test kits to accommodate 120 water samples. Water quality results will be confidential and will be emailed or mailed to residents’ homes.

Instructions for decontaminating a well are available through the following publications free for download at <http://twon.tamu.edu/fact-sheets/>: Decontaminating Flooded Water Wells and Shock Chlorination of Wells.

Drew Gholson, AgriLife Extension program specialist and network coordinator, College Station, said wells should be inspected for physical damage and signs of leakage after a flood.

“If it appears damaged, consult a licensed water well contractor to determine whether repairs are needed,” Gholson said.

He also noted flooding can damage the well pump and electrical systems.

“If the pump and/or electrical system has been underwater and it is not designed to be under water, do not turn on the pump as there is a potential for electrical shock or damage to your well or pump,” he said.

Gholson said once floodwaters have receded and the pump and electrical system have dried, have a qualified electrician, well driller or pump installer check the wiring system and other well components.

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